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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; LULA'S WARNING TO CHAVEZ; CHAVEZ AND THE
CLOSURE OF RCTV; 06/11/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend international opinion pieces and editorials cover Lula's criticism of Chavez's verbal excesses; Chavez's inconsistent response to the Pope's warnings of growing authoritarianism in Latin America; and the "totalitarian" nature of Venezuelan Hugo Chavez's decision to close Radio Caracas Television.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Lula warns Chavez about the cost of verbal excesses"

Eleonora Gosman, Sao Paulo-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (06/09) "President Lula da Silva believes that the instability in the relationship between Washington and Caracas will only be overcome when a new US president takes office. As pointed out by Al Jazeera TV network, 'it is almost impossible to build a good relationship between George W. Bush and Hugo Chavez.'"

"Obviously enough, in this way, Lula insisted on defending his Venezuelan counterpart during an exclusive interview with the 'Folha de Sao Paulo' newspaper. However, during the interview, he also implied criticism of the Bolivarian leader by suggesting that verbal excesses always have a political cost. In this case, he said, the Brazilian Senate will block Venezuela's entry into Mercosur as a result of Chavez's remarks that (the Brazilian Senate) blindly follows US dictates."

- "Why did Chavez close Radio Caracas Television?"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (06/11) carries an op-ed piece by Emilio J. Cardenas, co-president of the Institute for Human Rights, International Bar Association, who writes "With the regrettable disappearance of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV)..., Hugo Chavez seems to have inflicted a deadly blow to press freedom and freedom of expression in Venezuela. However, what happened is not surprising. In any event, it is evidence of the now accelerated road to totalitarianism..."

"... According to opinion polls, today 80 percent of Venezuelans openly reject the closure of RCTV, which has sparked a strong decline in Hugo Chavez's popularity rating. Chavez lost no less than nine points and has now 41 percent of popular support. To this, one should add that three out of every 10 people who voted for Chavez would not do so today. Nevertheless, as often happens, it is too late to backtrack on a sad and completed episode."

"In suggestive contrast to RCTV's popularity, all government's TV channels, summed up, reached only 5.6 percent of the entire Venezuelan audience last year..."

"The lack of penetration of the official party's messages in the

Venezuelan audience generated deep concern in the Chavez administration... This is why, instead of competing with it, he decided to eliminate RCTV once and for all. His openly anti-democratic posture is also important evidence of abuse of power. One more piece of evidence.

"Chavez made this decision on the risk of waking a giant - one that is not mass media, but the awareness of Venezuelan public opinion, which, although numb for some time, seems to have been shocked now by the use of granting TV frequencies as a way to award, punish or pressure mass media or journalists in a discriminatory way, and the public does not accept this...

"(Venezuelan public opinion) has warned that through this procedure, one curtails one of the most important freedoms - freedom of expression. And this is why it has reacted."

- "Benedictus XVI and Hugo Chavez"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (06/10) editorializes "It is difficult to believe that German theology expert Joseph Ratzinger... had ever imagined that he would share a newspaper headline with the Venezuelan president and military. What do they have in common from an intellectual point of view?

"... More than a few media reported on Ratzinger's 'abhorrent historical concepts' when referring to the evangelization of Latin America, while covering remarks made by an apocalyptic and pro-indigenous Chavez who spoke of the Latin American holocaust...

"... As a matter of fact, two completely different interpretations cross each other - on the one hand, a religious intellectual marked a clear difference between colonization and evangelization; on the other hand, we have a populist figure with increasingly authoritarian and hegemonic features. Ratzinger's analysis is a

historical and conceptual one, while Chavez's response is vehement and inconsistent.

"... Chavez attempts to build on a speech in between nationalist and socialist ideas, with more personal appetite than intellectual rigor. If Chavez disagrees with Benedictus XVI so much, he should understand that the only possible response should be given on the same level the Pope gave it.

"Probably what has most irritated Chavez is the fact that, after having criticized capitalism and communism, Benedictus XVI warned about the serious danger posed by authoritarianism in Latin America. We, Argentines, do know what this is about. Venezuelans also."

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